

Four NATO soldiers killed, U.S. officer injured in Bosnia

By SRECKO LATAL
Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Bosnia's former battlefield foes claimed yesterday they had emptied their jails of all POWs, in a day marred by the deaths of four NATO soldiers and the wounding of a U.S. Army officer by sniper fire.

Three British soldiers were killed when their vehicle hit a mine near Mrkonjic Grad in the northwest. A Swedish soldier died when an armored personnel carrier skidded off a road in the north.

In Ilidza, a Serb-held suburb west of Sarajevo, Lt. Shawn H. Watts was grazed on the neck by a sniper's bullet. The 28-year-old from Greenwood, Miss., returned to duty several hours later.

NATO said it was investigating, but Bosnian Serb army officials in Ilidza said they knew nothing of the shooting.

It was the largest death toll of any single day of the NATO-led mission since it began Dec. 20. Before yesterday, there were 35 injured and four dead, including a British soldier who killed himself.

Meanwhile, with hundreds of war prisoners released Saturday, it appeared that most of those in captivity before the weekend had been set free.

Croats and Muslims freed about 380 prisoners Saturday at the Sarajevo airport, a neutral site commonly used for such releases. Yesterday, 74 were confirmed released by the Serbs and eight by the Bosnian government.

A Bosnian Serb spokesman said the release of another 74 outside of Sarajevo accounted for all Serb-held POWs, but the Red Cross could not immediately confirm that.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jakic Pero was carried by residents of Ilidza, Bosnia, after he stepped on a land mine yesterday. Another civilian also was injured.

"There are still people on the (Red Cross) list of 900 who have not been released yet," said Red Cross official Pierre Krahenbuhl in Banja Luka, a Serb-held city in the north.

Red Cross spokesman Pierre Gauthier said the Bosnian Croats fulfilled their POW release obligations Saturday. However, they still have about 50 prisoners who are being investigated for possible war crimes.

Gauthier said the Croats had the right to keep them "for a reasonable time."

Red Cross officials complained that in addition to the POW releases, there

have been swaps that could amount to "ethnic cleansing."

They were investigating an unsupervised Bosnian government-Serb exchange of at least 350 civilians Saturday in Sanski Most to see whether they had been expelled or had left of their own will.

The Red Cross also complained the government was thought to hold many people at a military prison in Tuzla, and its delegates had not been allowed to visit them.

Some of the POWs released during the weekend spoke of severe maltreatment by their captors.